

Field “pit stop” for aviators during VSIII

By Sgt. 1st Class Lek Mateo
100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

DRAWSKO POMORSKIE TRAINING AREA, Poland — Gas and oil are the lifeblood of everything mechanical.

Without those two vital petroleum, life would be a disaster for the aviators of V Corps' 6th Squadron, 6th U.S. Cavalry, 11th Aviation Regiment who fly America's premier state-of-the-art attack helicopter, the AH-64D Apache Longbow.

The Longbows are a vital weapon in the simulated war being fought here at Victory Strike III, the corps' joint exercise with Polish forces. Deep-strike attacks behind enemy lines are at the heart of the training scenarios here, and the Apache is the corps' deep-strike spearhead. Without fuel and arms, the menacing aircraft, capable of destroying any target on the modern battlefield at any time and in any weather conditions, would be useless.

Keeping the Longbow in this mock battle over the skies of Poland is the mission of the soldiers of the support platoon of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 6/6th Cavalry. It's their job to refuel and re-arm the Longbow and return it to the fight where it is needed most.

In the rolling pastureland on the outskirts of the Polish town of Brzeziny the troop established a Forward Arming and Refueling Point (FARP) — a field “pit stop” for the units' aviators as they perform their deep strike mission nearby.

1st. Lt. Jason P. Sutton is a Longbow pilot and also the support platoon leader. This is his FARP. It's his job to use his pilot's perspectives to ensure the FARP is set up to safely facilitate the aircraft flying in to the site.

“A pilot is usually assigned to an aviation squadron support platoon for the simple reason is that he can actually visualize what he would want as a landing pad if he was actually flying into the FARP,” said Sutton. The FARP commander also checks for critical things that would affect the aircraft when the pilots are trying to land, such as the slope of the terrain and obstacles and debris on the flight line that can be sucked into the aircraft's engines or four rotor blades. He also determines the wind conditions so that he can radio incoming pilots and guide them into the

prevailing wind.

There are three types of refuelings, Sutton said, and each has its inherent hazards, especially at night. That's why the unit trains constantly and keeps itself abreast of standard procedures for the flight crews and pilots.

The most dangerous refueling method is the “hot gas,” when both of the aircraft's twin gas turbine engines are running as it is being refueled and rearmed.

For the Brzeziny mission the flight crews will be do a “warm gas” refueling, shutting down one engine for increased safety. But specific precautions must be in place before the crews perform the delicate procedure with the aircraft on the ground.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Lek Mateo
Ground crews “bond” the fuel nozzle to the aircraft after it has been “safed” by the pad chief.

“Before our soldiers hook up the fuel nozzle to the aircraft, the pad chiefs make sure that the anti-collision light that normally blinks on the side of the aircraft is off, to let the flight crew know that the pilots have shut down the number two engine located on the side of the refueling port.

In wartime, the pilot would not shut down any engines at all,” explained Sutton.

Sutton depends on the experience of his pad chiefs to ensure that the operation runs safely and efficiently, so the aircraft can be back in the air in the standard time of approximately 15 minutes.

At this FARP, Spc. Jose A. Pena has been given the position of pad chief, a job normally done by a senior

sergeant. Pena's task is to establish visual and voice communication with the pilot, and oversee the methodic refueling and arming activities performed by his pad crew.

“It's important to establish good communication with the pilot and us. If the pilot doesn't tell you that he is doing something, like transmitting the radio to another aircraft while we are refueling, a spark can go off and we would have a fire,” said Pena.

Pena explained that he would first “safe” the aircraft by grounding it, to transfer the static electricity created by the rotors harmlessly into the ground. Afterwards, he secures all the missiles on the aircraft's stubby external wing-like weapons pylon and the lethal 30mm M230 chain gun carried underneath the cockpit, before the ground crews approach the aircraft. Dangers exist however, Pena is confident in his training.

Medevac exercises test emergency system

By Spc. Rebecca Burt
V Corps Public Affairs Office

DRAWSKO POMORSKIE TRAINING AREA, Poland — An accident can happen in the blink of an eye. In a blur of movement, a once-healthy, happy soldier can be fighting for life, hanging on by only a thread of determination and your ability to react properly.

Are you ready for that split second? The second when a face that you see every morning in formation is totally dependant upon you to react, when every second can tip the scales closer to death of life?

Many soldiers who participated in mass casualty training exercises conducted here over the past week said they feel more confident than ever that they are.

The V Corps Surgeon's Office, the corps' 30th Medical Brigade and units at each of the several training areas here worked together to provide hundreds of soldiers with hands-on mass casualty training as part of their participation in the V Corps-Polish forces exercise Victory Strike III.

Each of the training sessions started essentially the same — with a simulated accident call, sparking the gears of command and control into action. During a "mass cal," information is passed along the lines of command in a flash, reaching all the people who will be needed at the scene, including Military Police, a Quick Reaction Force, the public affairs office and the chaplain's office. For the exercises here, the call is also forwarded to the 93rd Medical Task Force, which dispatches a helicopter for medical evacuation.

Once the medevac helicopter arrives at the scene of the simulated accidents, its crew takes time to teach the soldiers on site how to correctly strap patients into stretchers, carry litters, load and unload patients and how to move around a helicopter safely. Four-man teams, each with a volunteer "patient"

practiced in the training here, first without the helicopter's engines on and then with the blades whirling overhead.

"It was very realistic," said Sgt. David L. Penrod, a soldier with A Company, 94th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy) who participated in the training at the Drawsko Pomorskie Training Area headquarters in Oleszno. "Instead of just pretending to be there, you actually had to watch out for the blades, and it felt very real."

The training also made soldiers feel more prepared and confident in their abilities to cope with emergencies, said Pfc. Zaire Patrick, another soldier with A Company, 94th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy) who participated in the training at Oleszno.

"It was great training, all around," he said. "Everybody should get to do it."

"With recent world events as they are, it's important training," agreed Penrod. "If you learn this now, then in the real world you can jump right in and make things happen."

And that is precisely what this training is for, according to Master Sgt. Charles L. Campbell, senior plans and operations NCO for the V Corps Surgeon's Office.

"It's important to train and coordinate beforehand, because when people are hurt, minutes count," he said. "The more you can prepare, the more likely you are to save a life."

Campbell claims that the three days of training here marked the first time an air mass casualty exercise has been done on a scale this large during a Victory Strike exercise.

"Medevac and ambulance teams usually take time to go out and get familiar with the training areas they

will be serving and some smaller exercises are done, but this is the first full-spectrum practice," he said.

According to Campbell, this year's exercise was different because it covered every aspect of an emergency call, from the original report of an accident through to the medevac's take off from the accident site. Most "mass cal" training events only exercise a small aspect of the process or one piece of the emergency team.

"If this had been a real accident, that medevac helicopter could be headed back to Germany right now," he said. "This exercise went a long way past just an evacuation — it included the entire command and control chain from start to finish."

All the exercises were successful, proclaimed Campbell. "One sergeant major told me that the exercise was 'more valuable than 1,000 sergeant's time training sessions,'" he said.



Photo by Spc. Rebecca Burt
Pfc. Zaire Patrick, A Company, 94th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy), Pvt. 2 Aaron Lohr, 578th Signal Company and Sgt. David L. Penrod, also of A Co., 94th ECB, load a 'patient' into a Medivac helicopter during an Air Mass Casualty exercise.



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Communication

...essential to exercises

By Pfc. Kristopher Joseph
V Corps Public Affairs Office

DRAWSKO POMORSKIE TRAINING AREA, Poland – Today's Army functions with some of the most cutting-edge technology. A commanding general could almost plan, monitor and execute a full-scale war in the comfort of his own living room, with a laptop or two. Here at V Corps' exercise Victory Strike III, missions live and die on the skills of those who have been given the daunting task of making sure everyone can communicate.

These "tech-doctors" play an invaluable role here that often goes unnoticed. Whether they are tucked away in their automation room monitoring the exercise's constantly chaotic Internet server, or tirelessly picking the silicon brain of a paralyzed laptop, these computer gurus work night and day to keep the "electrons" that keep the more than 5,000 U.S. and Polish soldiers of Victory Strike training.

"If we were not here, the mission would not go," said Spc. Michael E. Sheppard, an information systems analyst, 22nd Signal Brigade.

The core of the Victory Strike automation mission is a team of soldiers and civilians from a G-6 (communications) detachment in Heidelberg, Germany. The team's primary concern is making sure the exercise's Local Area Network lines are feeding everyone's communication tools properly. "Without us here, no one could use their phones, computers or radios," Sheppard said.

Well before each year's Victory Strike exercise, the automation team coordinates with every participating section to find out what its individual requirements are for the exercise. To ensure the exercise's battle rhythm never skips a beat, they have to be sure they know how many phone lines are needed, and how many computers must be able to "talk" on either the corps' Non-Secure Internet Protocol Routing Network (NIPRNET) or Secure Internet Protocol Routing Network (SIPRNET).

As if the task of keeping thousands of phones and computers constantly alive with the exercise's "battle rattle" wasn't Herculean enough, the technology that drives it all keeps changing and improving. The automation team must continually evolve and improve as well. "We keep up with the latest technology daily," said Sheppard. "We're always taking a new class on something job-related."

For example, Sheppard said in the near future the Army will likely be developing a complete and advanced Internet conferencing system that will require the team to learn a whole new set of knowledge and skills.

The job is not a walk in the park by any means. They often have a stack of work orders or "trouble tickets" on their desks to respond to. Dedicated to help, they sometimes spend an entire workday fixing one person's laptop if need be.

"We're immune to all the problems," Sheppard said. "Flexibility and patience are in my mind moment to moment."

With virtually everyone in the armed forces relying heavily on computer equipment, malfunctions are bound to occur. Because the battle rhythm must be maintained first and foremost, rank and position go out the window when there are problems. But there are some simple things users can do, Sheppard said, to alleviate many of the common communication troubles that arise in a deployed environment:

- Bring extra LAN cables

- Check equipment with your Information Management Officer before deploying
- Attend a basic information management class to broaden knowledge on how the LAN works
- Bring power adaptors that comply with equipment voltage
- Bring extra extension cords
- Bring extra surge protectors

"They take real good care of us here," said Capt. David Manley, Exercise Control Support Officer for Victory Strike III.

"We depend on those automation guys," said Sgt. 1st Class Terry Ingle, EXCON noncommissioned officer in charge. "We could not survive out here without them, because they enable the exercise to happen."

It is uncanny that the millions of dollars the military spends on cutting-edge equipment can be muted by the cut of a single wire. With all



Photo by Pfc. Kristopher Joseph
Spc. Michael E. Sheppard, information systems specialist, 22nd Signal Brigade, and Michelle Rist, G-6 systems administrator, V Corps, review network applications for the Drawsko Pomorskie Training Area.

the technology the Army uses and possesses, the success of most missions rest on the fingertips and know-how of these unsung heroes.

In a wartime situation, the communication section provides its service at all ends of the battlefield. That service actually begins before the battles start, so that they can resolve every possible problem before it happens. This allows the corps to maintain its battle rhythm without delay.

The mechanism to provide that non-stop communication for command and control is also extremely flexible. When the corps moves out, it takes along its deployable command post system. The system can be configured in many different ways, depending on the needs of the mission. Any one of those "CPs" is built to be self-supporting on the battlefield, automation officials said.

"We anticipate what the corps commander is trying to do and provide him seamless support," said the 22nd Signal Brigade's Maj. Tom Leto, the corps' chief of tactical automation.

Editor's note: Pfc. Kristopher Joseph is assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 18th Military Police Brigade.

Sports

MLB: San Francisco is out to a 2-game lead in the NLCS after sweeping the Cardinals in St. Louis. The Giants' Rich Aurilia, not Barry Bonds, led them to victory hitting 2 home runs in Game 2 giving him 4 so far in the playoffs...And as ALCS moves West the Angels and Twins are tied at 1 game a piece. Eric Milton took the mound for Minnesota against Jarod Washburn and the Angels in Anaheim last night.

College Football: Lee Suggs and Kevin Jones combined for 334 yards on the ground against Boston College Thursday as the No. 4 Hokies defeated BC 28-23...Texas Quarterback Chris Simms has been less than impressive against Oklahoma in the past, lofting 4 interceptions and zero wins. He hopes to improve his legacy in Austin Saturday against a tough Sooners defense in what has the makings of a classic Red River showdown between No.2 Texas and No.3 Oklahoma...other games today include:

No.1 Miami (5-0) vs. No.12 Florida State (5-1)
 No.6 Georgia (5-0) vs. No.9 Tennessee (4-1)
 No.7 Oregon (5-0) vs. No.25 UCLA
 No.8 Notre Dame (5-0) vs. Pittsburgh (5-1)
 No.15 LSU (4-1) vs. No.16 Florida (4-2)
 No.17 Penn State (4-1) vs. No.10 Michigan (4-1)
 No.19 Air Force (5-0) vs. BYU (3-2)
 TCU (4-1) vs. Army (0-5)

NFL: With Washington area residents on edge because of a recent string of sniper shootings, fans are still determined to go see their team play. Redskins play the New Orleans Saints in a game at FedEx Field that's expected to draw more than 80,000 people, including thousands of tailgaters. The field is less than 10 miles from a Bowie, Md., middle school where a 13-year-old boy was shot and wounded Monday. Seven people have been killed and two wounded in the weeklong shooting spree. Police report no solid leads or clues in the case...Falcons coaches made it official Thursday, that starting quarterback Michael Vick will not play Sunday against the Giants. Doug Johnson will start in place of Vick who is nursing a sprained shoulder.

Weather

Today: Partly cloudy skies with morning fog. Winds will be out of the east at 5 knots becoming northeasterly 10-15 with gusts to 25 knots. High: 50F
 Low: 28F
 Tomorrow: Cloudy skies with late night rain and snow. Mixed winds will be northeast east 12-15 with gusts to 17 knots. High: 41F Low: 28F

(Weather provided by V CORPS USAF Weather Team)

Information Roundup

76th Army Band to play several performances in Polish communities

The band's schedule includes performances at:

Sulecin, Oct. 12 and 13. The exact time and location are to be announced.

Walcz, Oct. 14. At the concert hall at noon and 5 p.m.

Mirowslawiec, Oct. 15. At the cultural center at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Drawsko Pomorskie, Oct. 16. Open-air concert at 3:30 p.m.

Zlocieniec, Oct. 16. At the cultural center at 6:30 p.m.

Drawsko Pomorskie, Oct. 17. At the school hall at noon.

Szczecin, Oct. 18. (Szczecin Day). At Jasne Blonia Park, 11 a.m.

Szczecin, Oct. 18. At the ducal palace at 4 p.m.

Promotion while training here at VSIII



Photo by Pfc. Jeanine E. Toloza
Pfc. Justin P. Groves, a San Diego, Calif. native and soldier from Headquarters Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 501st Aviation Regiment, 1st Armored Division in Hanau, is promoted here to Specialist by his section sergeant, Staff Sgt. John F. Barlow. The soldiers are in the fuel and ammunition platoon supporting Victory Strike III.

Editor's note: Capt. Piotr Dziurdzia's quote in the story "U.S. troops are welcomed!" Vol. 2, No. 4, was incorrect due to an editing error. The 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment Commander accepts full responsibility.